

## Message Text

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AGENCY FOR IAA IPS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/P AND AF/W

FOR VOA NEWS COVERAGE DESK FROM GRANT BANJUL

GAMBIAN WEDDING

INTRO: IN BANJUL THIS WEEKEND GAMBIANS ACCORDED A YOUNG AMERICAN COUPLE A TRADITIONAL WEDDING CEREMONY THAT DATES BACK TO THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY. VOA CORRESPONDENT ROBERT GRANT REPORTS FROM THE GAMBIAN CAPITAL.

TEXT: EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO FOUR YOUNG AMERICANS, ALL GRADUATES OF THE FAMED RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN, ARRIVED IN THE GAMBIA TO SET UP A NEW BUSINESS.

WORKING WITH THE GOVERNMENT AND VILLAGERS NEAR BANJUL, THE YOUNG AMERICANS BEGAN DESIGNING BATIK AND TIE-DYE DRESSES, BASED ON TRADITIONAL GAMBIAN DESIGNS, FOR THE AMERICAN MARKET.

THE BUSINESS NOW EMPLOYS OVER 80 GAMBIANS, AND THE OWNERS SAY AT THE MOMENT IT IS NOT LARGE BUT WITH LUCK AND TIME THEY MIGHT BE ABLE TO WEATHER THEIR ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND MAKE A SUBSTANTIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE GAMBIAS DEVELOPMENT.

THE FOUR YOUNG DESIGNERS ARE JAMES EDWARDS, DENA QUILICI, AND ROBIN AND CAROL WISEMAN.

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WHEN JIM AND DENA DECIDED TO GET MARRIED THIS WEEKEND GAMBIAIS BY THE HUNDREDS ARRIVED AT THEIR SMALL COMPOUND NEAR BANJUL TO GIVE A TRADITIONAL GAMBIAI SENDOFF TO THE YOUNG COUPLE TO WISH THEM WELL IN THEIR NEW LIFE.

THE PRINCIPAL PRaiser AT THE CEREMONY, A DISTINGUISHED GAMBIAI NAMED EUGENE JOHN, SAYS EVER SINCE THE YOUNG PEOPLE ARRIVED IN THE COUNTRY THEY HAVE BEEN WORKING FOR THE BETTERMENT OF THE PEOPLE. THEY ARE TOLERANT, SYMPATHETIC AND RESPONSIBLE, SAYS PA JOHN, AND FOR THIS WE ENJOY HAVING THEM.

(OPT) THE PARTY STARTED IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON AND CONTINUED THROUGH THE EVENING. THE RHODE ISLAND PARENTS OF THE NEWLYWEDS, WHO ARE VISITING AFRICA FOR THE FIRST TIME, SAY IT IS SOMETHING THEY WILL NEVER FORGET. (END OPT)

(OPT) THE DANCES INCLUDED THE FRENETIC KUMPA DANCE WHERE PERFORMERS, COVERED WITH LONG GRASS, DANCE LIKE WILDLY SPINNING HAYSTACKS.

A TRADITIONAL DANCE OF THE MANDINGO PEOPLE WAS ALSO PERFORMED. IT IS KNOWN AS THE KANKURANG WHERE PERFORMERS COVER THEMSELVES WITH JUNGLE VEGETATION AND MASKS OF RAFFIA AND TWIRL LARGE MACHETE KNIVES. THE GAMBIAIS SAY THESE ARE DANCES THAT ARE NOT SEEN AS MUCH AS THEY SHOULD BE BUT THEY HAVE BEEN PASSED DOWN FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION AND THE PERFORMANCES REFLECT A CULTURAL RE-AWAKENING IN THE COUNTRY. (END OPT)

FOR THE GAMBIAIS THE PRESENTING OF A CEREMONY OF ANCIENT DANCES REFLECTED THEIR TRADITIONAL HOSPITALITY THAT HAS MADE THEM AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT STOP FOR VISITORS TO WEST AFRICA. AND FOR JIM AND DENA IT MARKED WHAT COULD WELL BE ONE OF THE MOST EXCITING SENDOFFS A YOUNG COUPLE COULD EVER HAVE.

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